

## Algona History



In June of 1874, the area that would become Algona was purchased by L.S. Rogers. This was then sold to Clarence Dayton (C.D.) Hillmann and his wife Bessie Hillmann in April 1906, and is the first mention of an easement for right-of-way for the Interurban Railway between Seattle and Tacoma (recorded July 1901). The earliest description of the land came from William Hart whose father homesteaded 600 acres in 1872. Hart said the land was “tall timber and lots of bears”. He owned 18 acres that is now Auburn 400 north of Boundary, and raised 17 to 18 tons of raspberries yearly in the 1920s. The soil is peaty which makes for rich soil for raising vegetation. The land was cleared and a few large farms appeared. The area was platted in 1906 by C.D. Hillmann in 40? by 200? lots.

The town was called Valley City and in 1907 there were two grocery stores on Main Street near First Avenue. One was owned by a Mr. Hicks and the other by a Mr. Schrader called the Valley City Mercantile, and was purchased by Claude Gooze in 1908. The people wanted a post office and a meeting was called, resulting in a letter being sent to Washington DC asking permit for a post office at Valley City. A letter came back saying to select another name as there was already a Valley City in eastern Washington. A Mr. Petrie, who originated from Wisconsin, suggested the name Algoma, an Indian name meaning “Valley of Flowers” and since everyone had beautiful flowers and excellent vegetation the name was submitted, but for some reason the name of Algona was substituted.



Mr. Claude Gooze was appointed Postmaster of Algona by President Howard Taft in the spring of 1909 and served until he retired in 1950. His wife Nina Gooze continued to work in the post office under Postmaster Richard Dahlager until May 1958. The post office was discontinued in July 1958 with mail service being handed over entirely to Auburn.

### 1910-1950

The year 1910 found more people moving into the area and more businesses popping up. The streets were dirt roads and on rainy days horses wore “bog shoes” in the mud. There were wooden sidewalks on First Avenue which were graveled later. Main Street was made up of wooden planks while what is now West Valley Highway

was a brick road. At this time the business district consisted of Nelson Thomas Grocery, Wright's Drugstore, Sound Department Store, Waddell Feed Store, Simon's Bakery, a small grocery owned by a Mrs. Felt, a tailor shop, a barber shop, a shoe repair shop, a meat market, a dress and hat shop, a real estate office, and a lumberyard.



During this time Algona was a busy little community in part due to poor transportation. It took all day to ride to the Northwest Market in Tacoma on a road that crossed the west hill, and people were generally content to use the local stores. It was a town of excitement with dancing two nights a week, picture shows three nights a week, and different festivals. Northern Pacific Railroad owned two hotels in the area to house their employees and there were times the Interurban train carried as many as six cars of soldiers going to Fort Lewis. Other towns in the Valley also came to dances and other festivities. Some of the prominent names in Algona during the 1920s included Gooze, Howard, Hart, O'Neal, Lundland, Brown, Bacon, Smart, Lynch, Grissom, Osterhome, Solak, Mervick, Hicks, Beatty, Sofsky, McCalister, Ney, Wiley, Yandell, Tait, Green, Lind, Wright, Jennings, Thompson, Felt, Waddell, Simon, Fuller, Dragseth, Bourn, Leonard, Miller, and Peterson.



The Asian population consisted mainly of Filipinos and Japanese who had large fields of beans, peas, rhubarb, celery, lettuce, cabbage, raspberries, and strawberries. During the 1930s the valley from Seattle to Tacoma was used for growing crops of all sorts. Large farms operated mostly by these Japanese and Filipino immigrants produced large quantities of fruits and vegetables, which were hauled to Public Markets in Seattle and Tacoma, as well as to a processing plant in Kent, owned by Libby McNeil, where vegetables were canned and cabbage was turned into Kraut. The large-scale agricultural era came to an end with the relocation of the Japanese population during World War II.

During this time Algona had a newspaper called the "Algona Community News" with the first edition on Oct. 26, 1926 urging people to move to Algona for the "fertile garden soil, splendid school system, a growing church, a lively Community Club, and with streetcar service to Seattle and Tacoma and bus service to Auburn". An article in that same edition talked of the combined Algona and Pacific Fair, where surprised visitors from Auburn and other towns in the area were met with a wide array of farm produce, including peanuts, tobacco, rye wheat, strawberries, corn, squash, and celery. The Community Club was very active in community affairs at this time, pushing for roadwork on city streets and a solution to a chronic problem with ditches, caused by the County grading the roads and leaving dirt in the ditches. The Community Club also supported the Fire Department, bought the first six street lights (later adding 12 more), supported the library, and arranged dances and other gatherings to raise money. During the 1940s, the Inter-City Water District of Tacoma owned the first water system in Algona and put in temporary wooden pipes. The water system was sold to C.D. Richards of Algona, who put in one-inch pipes and added small wells. Forrest Bourn worked for C.D. Richards Water System from 1945 until 1952 systems, and later told people of the earthquake in 1949 that did serious damage to buildings in Algona, including the school building

and gymnasium. In 1952, C.D. Richards sold the water system to Pacific because there was no money to maintain it.



### **Algona Becomes Incorporated**

Interurban Railway In 1955 the City of Algona incorporated with Ward Thomas serving as the first Mayor of Algona until the general election in 1956. The first City Council members were Ora Thompson, Ed Solak, Herbert Yandell, Herman English, and Art Springer. In the late 1950s, plans were made to form a Water District because the existing one-inch pipe caused poor water pressure and no fire protection. The Water District was formed in 1959 with an arrangement to get water from Auburn. In the south part of Algona residents asked to be annexed to the city of Pacific rather than pay for the new water system.

Consequently the south boundary of Algona was moved from 7th Avenue South to 5th Avenue South. The first Water Commissioners were Forrest Bourn, Charles Fancher, and Herbert Yandell, while the first full-term Mayor was Durrell McAbee, who served from 1956 until 1960. In 1960, Author Horn was elected Mayor of Algona and served from 1960 to 1964. In the 1964 election, Author Horn and Durrell McAbee tied for votes. After a recount they were still tied in votes and they agreed to flip a coin and Durrell McAbee became Mayor of Algona for a second time. Mayor McAbee's main objective during his second term was to beautify the city, and a cleanup campaign was begun, resulting in rundown buildings being demolished and junk cars, trash, and blackberry vines being removed. Mayor McAbee was an airline pilot and his busy schedule forced him to resign as Mayor in 1966 and Gerrard Ray finished his term, serving as Mayor until 1968.

In the years after 1965, major changes were taking place in Algona. It was in this year that work started at the General Services Administration Depot (GSA) on C Street in Auburn, that would house the \$31 million Boeing Company Fabrication Plant. This created immediate traffic problems for the city of Algona with its then-population of 1,228, narrow, ditch-lined roads, and a Police force of only two. With no funds to reconstruct West Valley Highway, 1st Avenue North, and Pacific Avenue, the City of Algona was advised to apply for state funds to meet the increasing traffic demands and the need for general road improvement.

### **Mayor John Matchett**

John Matchett was elected Mayor of Algona in 1968 and served until 1981, serving three full terms, which made him the longest serving Mayor in Algona history. He guided the city through a number of public works improvements including a new water supply system, taking over Water District #101, and also a new sewer system. During his administration the Algona Grade School at 402 Warde Street was closed and a new school was built at 310 Milwaukee Boulevard North named Alpac Elementary, which served the cities of Algona and Pacific. The old Algona Grade School was renovated and the City Hall, Police Department, and Library moved there in 1975. Also during this period, a frontage road was added to the Algona streets and was named Algona Boulevard. Highway 167 was extended down the valley south to Tacoma, which aided in shuttling traffic through the city. Mayor Matchett started plans for a grant to create the Algona City Park in 1978. The park was later named the John Matchett Memorial Park in his honor. He retired from public office in 1981 because of ill health. In 1987 Keith Phillips, a truck driver and novice stonecarver, volunteered his time and skill to create a stone monument to Mayor Matchett, who was also a longtime Algona Council member. The owners of Valley Top Soil, Inc., donated a 2000 pound granite boulder for the project, as well as the equipment required to move the stone monument when it was completed. The monument was carved with a great blue heron on the left side of the boulder with "John Matchett Memorial Park" carved in letters. During the 1987 Algona Day Festivities, the park was rededicated by the City Council in Mayor John Matchett's name. Mayor Matchett had died earlier in the year on February 14 at age 74 after a long battle with cancer.

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## A Time of Turmoil

William Larson was the next Mayor of Algona, serving from 1981 until 1983. His term in office was a very trying time between the Mayor, City Council, and City Administrators. Mayor Larson fired Police Chief Dave Norton without knowledge of the council and hired Al Lee to take his place. A hearing then took place with the Civil Service Commission who directed Mayor Larson to reinstate Dave Norton as Police Chief with full back pay and benefits, but the Mayor failed to comply. This left the City of Algona with two Police Chiefs and the city paying one on duty and one at home. The case went to the King County Superior Court which ruled that Dave Norton should be reinstated as Police Chief for Algona. The turmoil eventually led to the recall of Mayor Larson. Hardin Railey served as Mayor of Algona to finish Mayor Larson's term. He ran for the position of Mayor in 1984, but lost to August Shuman.

## A Time of Change

The year 1984 was a time of change at Algona City Hall. The new Mayor, August Shuman took office at the same time that long-time City Clerk, Margaret Grass, retired after serving more than 20 years at City Hall. Kathy Morigi became the new City Clerk for Algona. August Shuman served as Mayor from 1984 until 1988. During this time Algona continued its growth in population and new businesses. The Tharco Manufacturing Plant, which packaged foam plastics, was the first tenant in the Algona ninety-acre portion of the Auburn 400 Business Park. Much credit for these developments was due to the Algona Economic Development Corporation, which was established to obtain tax-exempt financing for businesses that created environmentally clean industries. Also during this time, the "Algona Day Festivities" grew to become a vibrant community celebration. Started in 1983, Algona Days held the first successful 10 K. Swamp Romp in 1985 and in 1987, the City of Algona took part in the Seattle Seafair by entering a float in the Seafair Parade.

In 1988 Richard Waffle was elected Mayor of Algona. Mayor Waffle started a monthly newsletter for the citizens named the "Fishwrapper" to keep everyone informed on local activities and events. The Blue Heron was chosen as the City Logo and began to appear on signs and at City Hall. The brick section of the old Algona Grade School, which had been condemned, was destroyed and the bricks sold for 20 cents to anyone who wanted a piece of Algona history. The stone and some of the bricks were saved to use in the John Matchett Memorial Park entrance, and with the demolition, the park was enlarged. New playground equipment was installed, along with a gazebo, tennis courts, and a baseball field.

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